



Summer Driving Safety

Travel plans are one of the hottest topics of the summer. Whether meeting family at the coast or taking a road trip to Las Vegas with friends, vacations are at the center of many conversations. With everyone planning their trips, it is not surprising that routes to popular travel destinations can become increasingly congested during the summer months - over the 2013 Memorial Day weekend alone, approximately 31.2 million people traveled by automobile!¹ Although road trips may invoke images of driving along a wide-open, sunny highway, poor planning, bad driving conditions, traffic and other drivers can shatter these visions and lead to dangerous driving conditions.

Danger ahead

More people travel by motor vehicle than any other form of transportation in the United States, due in part to the degree of mobility it provides at relatively low cost; however, driving is not without its dangers. Early estimates indicate there were 34,080 people who died in motor vehicle crashes in 2012.² Knowing the risks for becoming involved in a crash may help you avoid a traffic accident by improving your driving habits and increasing awareness about what to watch for from other drivers. Here are some facts to consider³:

- Almost 80 percent of crashes involve some form of distracted driving. Distracted driving includes:
 - Texting or talking on your phone while driving
 - Eating and drinking
 - Talking to other passengers
 - Using vehicle or hand-held technology
 - Reading a map
- Being thrown from a car during a crash is almost always deadly. Seat belts saved approximately 11,949 lives in 2011.⁴ Ensure you and every passenger in the vehicle over the age of five is wearing a seat belt (children under five years old should be in an appropriate, approved child restraint).
- Every 45 minutes someone dies as a result of an alcohol-impaired driving crash in the United States. If you will be drinking alcohol, choose a designated driver to get you home safely. Have a back-up plan in case your driver decides to drink as well.

Proceed with caution

Fortunately there are things that you can do to keep yourself, family, friends and other travelers safe while on the road. Below are some tips for staying safe³:

- **Use the Travel Risk Planning System (TRiPS).** TRiPS is an online risk assessment tool for Sailors and Marines to use before they go on liberty or leave when they will be driving outside command travel limits. TRiPS can help travelers recognize and avoid some common driving hazards such as fatigue, not buckling up and driving too far.



- **Ensure your vehicle is up-to-date with routine maintenance.** Don't forget to do your own check immediately before leaving, including tire pressure, wiper blades and fluid levels.
- **Swallow your pride.** If you encounter an aggressive driver, move out of their way. Do not return gestures or challenge them by increasing your speed.⁵
- **Never leave children or pets unattended in a car.** Even a few minutes can be deadly. Rolling down the windows a couple of inches does not prevent the temperature from increasing to dangerous levels.
- **Avoid driving tired by:**
 - Stopping frequently for food, drink and bathroom breaks.
 - Staying at a motel or hotel if you are driving late into the night.
 - Share the driving if you are traveling with others.
- **Watch for motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians.** They are vulnerable when sharing the road with vehicles and can be easy to miss if you are not looking for them.
- **Keep an emergency kit in your vehicle at all times.** Suggested items include³:
 - First aid kit
 - Flashlight
 - Flares and a white flag
 - Jumper cables
 - Basic repair tools
 - A jug of water and paper towels for cleaning up
 - Nonperishable food, such as granola bars and drinking water
 - Extra windshield washer fluid
 - Maps

Stop here for additional resources

Summer travel should be a time for fun, sun and relaxation. A little prior planning can help you enjoy your hard-earned time off safely and with minimal stress. For additional tips and resources to help you plan your next road trip, visit:

- [Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center](#) for summer safety fact sheets on a wide variety of topics including drowsy driving prevention and information on texting and driving.
- [Naval Safety Center](#) to access TRiPS, learn about motorcycle safety, download posters and access the Command Master Chief's Toolbox.
- [National Highway Transportation and Safety Administration](#) for information on distracted and drunk driving, teen driving, fuel economy, travel research and data and more.



1. American Automobile Association. AAA projects Memorial Day travel to decline by 0.9 percent as auto travel increases slightly and air travel declines by eight percent. <http://newsroom.aaa.com/tag/memorial-day-travel-forecast/>. Published May 22, 2013. Accessed June 13, 2013.
2. United States Department of Transportation: National Highway Transportation and Safety Administration. Early estimate of motor vehicle traffic fatalities in 2012. <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811741.pdf>. Published May 2013. Accessed June 11, 2013.
3. National Highway Transportation and Safety Administration. Focus on safety — Cool tips for a safe summer trip. <http://www.safercar.gov/SummerDrivingTips>. Accessed June 7, 2013.
4. National Highway Transportation and Safety Administration's National Center for Statistics and Analysis. Traffic safety facts 2011 data: Overview. <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811753.pdf>. Published April 2013. Accessed June 11, 2013.
5. United States Department of Transportation. Stop aggressive driving. <http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/aggressive/Aggressive%20Web/index.html>. Published October 2000. Accessed June 10, 2013.